



CALIFORNIA NUTRITION NETWORK

FOR HEALTHY, ACTIVE FAMILIES

**LOCAL
INCENTIVE
AWARDEE
WEB SITE/PAGE
GUIDELINES**

November 2006



WEB SITE/PAGE GUIDELINES

Many of you have an existing web site/page or are currently developing a new website. This document can provide you with suggestions for web site design and usability guidelines, as well as requirements for content, “look and feel” and USDA attributions and acknowledgement.

These requirements are intended to promote accuracy, usability, accessibility, consistency and professionalism to the *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families*. It is not the intent to prescribe a definitive template that will keep contractors from developing their own unique sites/pages. Rather, it is our goal to have quality web sites/pages that are generally consistent across the region and with the State.

If you have technical questions related to your web site/page, please send an email to Mike MacIntosh, Manager of Information Technology and Systems Improvement Unit at CPNS (mmacinto@dhs.ca.gov) and your assigned Program Manager.

Please note that the web site/page must be approved by your Program Manager. It is strongly suggested that you keep in communication with your Program Manager during the development of your web site/page. You are encouraged to discuss your specific needs and concerns, especially if struggling to meet these guidelines. Upon the request of the contractor to their Program Manager, the web site/page will be reviewed by the Program Manager and CPNS IT staff. You will receive suggestions and approvals via email communication.

A. Web Credibility

1. Make it easy to verify the accuracy of the information on your site/page.
 - a. You can build web site/page credibility by providing third-party support (citations, references, source material) for the information you present, especially if you link to this evidence.
2. Show that there is a real organization behind your site/page.
 - a. Showing that your web site/page is for a legitimate organization will boost the site's/page's credibility. The easiest way to do this is by listing a physical address.
3. Highlight the expertise in your organization and in the content and services you provide.
4. Show that honest and trustworthy people stand behind your site/page.

- a. Show there are real people behind the site/page and in the organization and find a way to convey their trustworthiness through images or text (i.e. through employee bios).
5. Make it easy to contact you.
 - a. Making your contact information clear: phone number, physical address, and email address.
6. Design your site/page so it looks professional (or is appropriate for your purpose).
 - a. People quickly evaluate a site/page by visual design alone. When designing your site/page, pay attention to layout, typography, images, consistency, and more. The visual design should match the site's/page's purpose.
7. Make your site/page easy to use – and useful.
 - a. Sites/pages win credibility by being both easy to use and useful. Some site/page operators forget about users when they cater to their own company's ego or try to show the dazzling things they can do with web technology.
8. Update your site's/page's content often (at least show it's been reviewed recently).
9. Avoid errors of all types, no matter how small they seem.
 - a. Typographical errors and broken links hurt a site's/page's credibility more than most people imagine. It's also important to keep your site/page up and running.

B. General Template Requirements

1. The color version of the California Department of Health Services *California Nutrition Network* logo (see Image 1) must be included. This will be updated in 2007.
2. If the contractor uses their overall agency's logo, this should be incorporated into the banner/header that is present on each page of the web site/pages.
3. The color version of the California Department of Health Services *5 a Day* logo (see Image 2) must be included. This will be updated when the national rebranding of *5 a Day* goes into effect in 2007.



Image 1. California Department of Health Services *Nutrition Network* logo

Available for download at:
http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/press/media_library.html



Image 2. California Department of Health Services *5 a Day* logo

Available for download at:
http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/press/media_library.html

4. You are not permitted to alter or modify the logos in any way:
 - a. You are not permitted to change the color palette of any CPNS-provided logos, unless to black and white or gray scale.
 - b. Do not change the font
 - c. Do not place logos on a busy background
 - d. If you adjust the size of any logos, the proportions must remain the same
5. The following footer must be present on the home page of your web site/page:
 - a. USDA attribution language/Funding Acknowledgement:

“Funded by the USDA’s Food Stamp Program through the *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families*. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help buy nutritious food for a better diet. For information on the Food Stamp Program, call 1-888-328-3483.”
 - b. Include a link to the State’s web site at: www.dhs.ca.gov/cpns. You may include the link as a hypertext in the USDA attribution above.
6. If your site/page uses trade, firm, or corporation names (i.e. Dole, Sunkist, etc.), you must include the following USDA disclaimer, as found on the USDA web site (<http://www.ars.usda.gov/comm.html>):

“The use of trade, firm, or corporation names in this publication (or page) is for the information and convenience of the reader. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement or approval by the United States Department of Agriculture or the Agricultural Research Service of any product or service to the exclusion of others that may be suitable. “

7. The LIA contract includes language that the State has ownership of all works produced with contract funds. Therefore, the web site/page cannot be copyrighted.
 - a. Non-university contracts: Refer to Exhibit D (F) of the contract
 - b. University contracts: Refer to Exhibit H

C. Usability

1. Make sure the content is appropriate and easy to read. Materials should be written at the 5th grade reading level, whenever possible.
2. User-friendly web sites/pages are easy to use and intuitive. Your web site/page should be easy for users to navigate.
3. Don't activate a link on your page until the linked document is available (even if you have an “under construction” notice). Repeated “File Not Found” errors will discourage visitors to your pages.
4. Assure that your web site/page is consistent. Consistency applies not just to layout but to every aspect of a site/page. This includes consistency in color and position (i.e. location of navigation bars, logos, etc.).
5. Provide a link to a complete printable or downloadable document if there are web pages, documents, resources, or files that users will want to print or save in one operation.
 - a. If users are likely to print one or more pages, develop pages with widths that print properly.
6. Provide a search option for each page.

D. Content

1. General
 - a. Content is the heart of your web site/page. Keep your users

coming back by providing quality, updated content. Great graphics will not make up for poor content.

- b. The content for the web site/page should be focused on information pertinent to the goals and activities of the *Network*.
- c. Links to external sites/pages should be relevant and used judiciously.
- d. Web pages should be checked and updated regularly.
- e. If you provide links to other pages, check them periodically to make sure they are still active and their content is still applicable.
- f. Use of copyrighted materials should be properly acknowledged.
- g. Try to keep total page size below 100k to minimize access time. People with slow network connections tend to get tired of waiting for large files and go somewhere else.
- h. Any page that incorporates links to PDF files must use the Adobe Acrobat/ PDF file notice.
- i. Include a warning if a link on your page will lead to a slow-loading document (i.e. a files 1 or 2 megs and larger).

2. Required content includes but is not limited to:

- a. Contact information
- b. Narrative from *Network* Project Summary or other text that describes your *Network* project activities
- c. Calendar of events for *Network* contract
- d. Links to USDA, CPNS, Harvest of the Month and *Regional Nutrition Network* home pages
- e. Web site usage statistics, in which usage data (hits, page views, etc.) is recorded in log files (should not be visible on the web site/page)

3. Optional Content

- a. Downloadable resources for FSNE target audiences

- b. General information and resources about physical activity
 - c. Local food security resources
- 4. Prohibited Content
 - a. Promotional content is not allowed (i.e. ads, offers). This includes:
 - 1. paid advertisements or paid sponsorships;
 - 2. pop-up advertisements;
 - 3. commercial links.
- 5. Prioritizing Content
 - a. The most important content should be at the top of the page as in a newspaper (“above the fold”). Put your most important information on the page where it is visible before you start to scroll (referred to as “above the scroll”).
 - b. Place important items consistently in the same locations and closer to the top of the page.
 - c. There should be one topic on each page unless two topics are closely related.
 - d. Repeat important links. Ensure that important content can be accessed from more than one link.

E. Writing for the Web

- 1. People rarely read web pages word by word; instead, they scan the page, picking out individual words and sentences. As a result, your web pages need to employ scan able text, using:
 - a. Highlighted key works (hypertext links serve as one form of highlighting; typeface variations and color are others)
 - b. Meaningful sub-headings (not “clever” ones)
 - c. Bulleted lists
 - d. One idea per paragraph (users will skip over any additional ideas if they are not caught by the first words in the paragraph)

- e. Use the inverted pyramid style of writing, starting with the conclusion
 - f. Use half the word count (or less) than conventional writing
2. Follow these general writing guidelines, as well:
- a. Define acronyms and abbreviations; avoid jargon
 - b. Use abbreviations sparingly
 - c. Use familiar words
 - d. Make first sentences descriptive
 - e. Use active voice
 - f. Limit the number of words and sentences
 - g. Limit prose text on navigation pages
3. Many web sites put up their print content in PDF or Word files, which are not user-friendly. Research shows that while PDF files may be good for printing, web site visitors prefer to read HTML pages over PDF.

F. Readability

1. Assure that the layout design does not cause any readability problems.
 - a. One option is to use a “liquid” table design allowing the page to adjust automatically to the resolution of the user’s monitor or that of the user’s browser window. This technique provides the user with acceptable page layout no matter the display technology that the user may employ.
 - b. Fixed page widths can be designed without any readability problems for the user.
2. Provide a font size that is large enough for the average reader. Literature suggests that fonts smaller than 12-points elicits slower reading performance from users.
3. Provide a good contrast between the text color and the background color, for example, black text on a white background

4. Avoid background images and colored backgrounds that make the page harder to read
5. Use white space to break up content
6. Check gray text to make sure it is dark enough to read
7. Use italics minimally
8. Do not right justify unless necessary
9. The use of animated (blinking or moving) objects and text should be avoided. These can be overwhelming and distracting to the professional content of your web site and can affect page load time. They may also present significant barriers to access by individuals with disabilities (also see Section K).
10. All pages should contain a date created and contact information.

G. Consistent Navigation on Every Page

1. Every page should have the same navigation buttons in the same order. When you click on a button it can open into subsections.
2. A primary navigational system with a standard left-hand page location should be grouped by subject if the number of links exceeds six.
3. Provide sufficient cues to clearly indicate to users that an item is clickable.
4. Visitors want to know “Where am I?”, “Where can I go?” and “Where have I been?” Add an indicator in your navigation button that shows what page you are on.

H. Page Titles and Navigation Buttons

1. Page titles should be identical to navigation buttons.
2. Select page titles that correspond closely to the content of the page. Use headings that are unique from one another and conceptually related to the content they describe.

I. About Us and Contact Us Pages

1. It is important to have an About Us page and a link to it from your home page. Trust and credibility are major issues on the web.

2. The Contact Us page is one of the most requested pages on a web site/page. If visitors cannot locate this page or there is no physical address or phone number they can call, they may question whether or not this is a legitimate organization.
3. Every page should have a link to a Contact Us page.

J. Images

1. Images should be prepared (optimized) for your web site. Resolutions matter on the web.
2. A high-resolution image will take longer to load (view). Since visitors like fast-loading sites, keep load time to 10 seconds or less if possible (realizing that load time varies depending upon the user's type of modem).
3. Photographs, charts and other visuals that are used throughout the web site should be selected on their relevance and appropriateness to the content. Imagery should be in good taste and dignified.

K. Accessibility for People with Disabilities

1. Accessibility is required for all web sites.
2. Minimal accessibility includes writing "alt tags." You can see an "alt tag" by putting your mouse over an image and watching a text note pop up.
3. Following accessibility standards can be complex. Here are just a few examples:
 - a. Make tables understandable when read line by line
 - b. Allow visitors to increase the size of the text on the page
 - c. Include text navigation links
4. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that private Web sites be accessible to blind and visually impaired Internet users. Non-compliance may result in fines. (For additional information, go to: <http://news.com.com/2100-1038-5318568.html>)

L. Scrolling

1. Visitors are used to scrolling down a page (vertical scrolling). However, it is not user-friendly to scroll horizontally across the page. Design your pages so that your content is visible without scrolling horizontally.

M. Privacy Policy

1. If your site will be collecting personal information, you must provide a privacy policy that states:
 - a. Information collected and how it is used
 - b. Whether visitors' information is shared with third parties and whether they have a choice about how their information is used
 - c. Whether visitors have access to their personal information and whether they can correct errors
 - d. What precautions are used to secure consumers' personal information

References/Resources:

National Cancer Institute – Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines

- <http://usability.gov/guidelines/>

Nielsen, Jakob. How Users Read on the Web

- <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>

South Carolina Association of School Librarians

- <http://www.scasl.net/webguidelines.htm>

Stanford Web Credibility Research:

- <http://www.webcredibility.org/guidelines/index.html>
- <http://customwebhelp.com/non-technical-website-guidelines.shtml>